

[Miss Mattie Mather]

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Range-Lore

Ruby Mosley

Continuity

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RANGE-LORE

"My father (Mr. Mather) came from England with his wife and four children, settled in Louisiana, where two more children were born", says, Miss Mattie (Babe) Mather of San Angelo, Texas. "This wife died and he married Miss Sarah Parker Smith, who was twenty-one years of age and had lived in Louisiana since the age of twelve, when she came from Millageville, Georgia. My mother and father had two children in Louisiana, then moving to Texas where ten more children were added to the family while pioneering the wilderness and suffering hardships of that area.

"My oldest brother Andrew was born in a tent/ in 1851, and was the second white child born in Williamson County. He died at the age of 78 and was delivered back to his birthplace for C.12 - 2/11/41 - Texas 2 burial. That track of land had been converted into a cemetery/ and the same location of the tent was chosen for the grave.

"Our family became very prosperous, my father was a good manager with family as well as business. Father soon owned and operated a grist mill, flour mill, saw mill, blacksmith shop, post office and general village store.

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"When the Civil War broke out my father went to enlist but was not permitted but requested to stay at home where he could care for the little town, provide for the citizens, serve his country better at home than in the army.

"In the early days Texas was some what made up of outlaws evading punishment in their own state. Their children would say, 'What did your father do that he had to come to Texas?' Then they would relate murder and criminal stories that had brought their fathers to Texas.

"In those days Indians were still pilfering and pillageing the wooded sections of Texas. I remember one particular tragedy that happened to our friends that lived in Lampasas County near Williamson County.

"Marcus Skaggs 16, Benton Skaggs 12 and a kid friend about the same age put their oxen to the wagon and went to my father's mill to have the corn ground into meal. On the return some Indians stopped them, the kids had no protection except the large forest on one side of the road and a small one on the other. The boys chose the large forest knowing the customs of Indians. The Indians emptied meal out of the sacks, killed the oxen but did not enter the forest. The 3 Indians disappeared and the boys wanting to see what had happened to the ox wagon, went across the road to the small forest. People were often fooled by the Indians imitating barking dogs and other familiar animals. They watched the boys enter the small wooded section and followed; here's where trouble began. The little friend was shot through the temple, and Marcus in the hip. It was left to Benton the 12 year old boy to get aid. Night was drawing near, the two boys shot and the oxen killed, Benton started home. He [chose?] the nearest route possible; ran up the river where he came to the bodies of two neighbors. The Indians had killed them and taken their guns and that's what they used to shoot the boys. This gave Benton encouragement to run for life, soon he came to one of the dead men men's home; he was so tired that he drank a cup of coffee to give him strength to get home. He kept all of the trouble to himself, did not tell the lady of the house that her husband lay dead in the river bottom. Benton ran home, got

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the men and a wagon to go after Marcus and friend to bring them home. The friend died and Marcus soon recovered. The next morning they told the women of their husbands and brought their bodies home for burial.

“Fort Croghan was an Indian trading post; they would come here from all parts of the wilderness to do their trading and begging. These Indians would venture down to our tents, a different Indian would do the talking and managing each day, pretending the others could not talk. The Indians 4 were very fond of my father, mother and baby sister. They would beg mother to let the baby go riding with them but were always refused, they would give her anything they possessed, she died at the age of two and had already collected about two yards of Indian beads. Mother was crazy about honey, they wanted to give her some, when she went after it she saw a green bag hanging on a limb of a tree, as she drew nearer she decided that it must be a swarm of bees, she could see something flying around, but was amazed when she found it to be a bag of honey put up in a deer hide and was covered by green flies. Father often went hunting with them and wasn't afraid he was bald headed and said, 'They wont scalp me I don't have any hair on my head. My father had a grind stone which caused much excitement among the Indians. They could not understand its use. They would watch my father grind his ax, then they would turn the stone with their fingers pressed against it until their fingers would bleed and a few times grind to the bone just to see what it was all about.

“The Mexicans would often come over and take the Indian squaws and rush back to Mexico, then the Indians would go over and get their wives some Indians and some Mexicans, this caused a mixture of the two races. There was a big old Comanche Chief named Yellow Wolf, they called him this because he was half Mexican. Old Yellow Wolf had a big sore on the side of his stomach he would say, 'This side 'No bueno' Mexican, this side 'Mas bueno', Indian. 5 “When I was a little girl no womans dress was complete without hoops. At eight years of age I decided that I too must wear hoops. My desire became so strong that I consulted mother, she sent me to the store I had to beg and cry before my uncle, salesman in fathers store would agree with me. I put them on, pranced

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up the street and strutted before my little friends. They were much too long and I was teased by the observers which brought tears again. Old Granny our nurse negro slave cut them off to fit, I dried my tears and strutted until I became tired then decided to sit down and when I did the hoops flew up and gave me a lick on the nose that knocked me over and again I cried. Old Granny came to my rescue as usual and taught me how to pull the hoops up in the back before seating myself.

"When I was a little school girl 11 years of age paralysis struck an optic nerve which caused me to be blind. I suffered and worried until we found that I could continue my education by entering the Institute for the Blind, Austin, Texas. I entered this institute in 1873 and received my diploma in 1881. I remained there a year longer continuing my music which proved to be helpful and entertaining throughout these many years.

"In October, 1900 I came to San Angelo. My sister and brother kept insisting that I come out and claim some school land by paying a small fee. Guides were located in San Angelo, as new comers arrived these guides would help them get located for \$100.00. The confusion began when more people came than land was available. In order to get the usual \$100.00 [?] 6 for location they would locate a new comer on another man's property and go on the next. Of course this confusion caused much trouble many times killing. I decided to buy my land.

"My sister Ada and I each bought twenty acres of the old Jim Farr Ranch where we now live. She lives over there in the next house, she only has two acres of land left she traded eighteen acres of this city land for two-hundred acres out on Grape Creek where they are expecting an oil boom, they have some oil near her place.

"You go over and let Ada show you her two acre farm, she is an old maid also, you know I am 80 years old and she is a few years younger. We don't live together it takes the entire house for each of us as you know I'm blind and when I place something I want it to stay there until I move it.

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"If I were to go over she would start the chicken feud again. She is really sold on Barred Rock chickens and white turkeys. She will also show you a shoe box full of prize ribbons that she has won at different fairs. I always liked the game chickens something that will stand up for its own rights, they caused so much confusion that I sold them.

"I read and write for most of my past time. I use the paint and braille system to read and correspond with my blind friends. I bought a typewriter and learned to write to my seeing friends.

"I am very independent even though some people say I'm handicaped. I do not get a pension, I didn't ask for it, and don't want it. I am not like those people begging for relief. 7 >"It is about time for my exercise, (reaching up to touch her braille clock. You see I have the chicken wire all the way around the porch, I walk up and down for exercise. (She walked briskly up and down the porch still reminiscent of the corset and bustle days of long ago).

"My real name is Mattie or Martha. When I was a child about three years of age I took a sudden dislike to my name because so many people called me (Marthie) instead of Martha. I like the name of Babe and would not answer when called otherwise, so you must call me Babe instead of Miss Mattie.